
AN EXISTENTIAL OPERATING MANUAL

Simple Guides to a Successful Life

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All his life he had been vaguely puzzled by why it, life, had been given to him and what he should do with it: that big, ribbonwrapped gift that came without solicitation and without instructions as to its maintenance or use. It was unreasonably given. Why, even a senseless chattering piece of metal like a light machinegun came fully equipped with literature on its various parts, its many small components itemized and illustrated and explained and the apertures where oil was to be poured labeled. But no rules or diagrams were provided for the great machine so gratuitously given to man. And after you seared it over the testing flames of all available emotion and hammered it on the anvil of your nerve ends, it still remained undefined and unexplained and remorselessly yours.

Certainly there were rules and instructions for the living of a life invented by men and institutions which had specific goals of their own, but these merely twisted life to fit their ends. Religions, politics, moralities -- all hopeless inadequate.

The Thousand Hour Day, W.S. Kuniczak

Introduction

A while back a friend of mine bought a new computer, one of those all-inclusive models with pre-installed software. It had everything. All kinds of programs built in. Speakers. Mouse. Everything anyone would need. Except an operating manual.

I took a look at it as a favor for my friend. I found out it did come with an operating manual, but the manual was stored on the computer's hard drive. You had to know how to operate the computer before you could look at the operating manual!

That's the way life is. We all have an operating manual, but we have to know how to find it -- deep inside ourselves.

Other people have tried to remedy the situation by publishing their own operating manuals for life: religious books, political treatises, philosophical tomes, and psychological how-to manuals.

What worked for Plato or Siddhartha or the Apostle Paul or Confucius more than two thousand years ago, however, isn't likely to be useful to me today.

I have spent my life reading "operating manuals" for life. All of them apparently "worked" for the people who wrote them, but none of them really "worked" for me.

The pages that follow are not strictly an operating manual.

They are an existential guide for writing your own operating manual.

Based on my many years as a minister and counselor, this guide is designed to help you write your own theology, your own psychology, your own philosophy.

The only guide available to each of us is the one we write ourselves.

What Is an Existentialist?

An existentialist is someone who prefers to look at the reality of life – what actually exists – rather than at the fantasies that keep us in emotional and societal chains.

We existentialists tend to reject the philosophies and theologies and ideologies that we've been taught all our lives were important, because we recognize them as tools designed to get us to follow the will of others. We'd rather follow our own paths and exercise our own wills.

Thus, we emphasize individual freedom and individual responsibility. We try to act in a common-sense, practical way and avoid the high-sounding and complicated – but essentially empty – pronouncements of the philosophers and theologians.

My favorite illustration of an existentialist is the story about an old farmer and an abandoned field.

Once upon a time (the story goes) an old farmer took possession of a field that had been abandoned for many years. It was covered with brush and trees and old stumps and huge stones.

First, he carefully cleared the field of debris. With the stones, he built a beautiful wall between the field and the road.

Then he broke the soil and worked it well and lovingly. He furrowed careful rows and planted seeds of all kinds.

Through the summer the old farmer carefully weeded the crops and made sure the plants received sufficient water.

By autumn, the field was covered with plentiful crops of every description.

As he was working in the field at his harvest, a local preacher walked by and stopped to admire the crops.

“My,” the preacher exclaimed piously, “What a wonderful harvest the Good Lord has given you!”

“Humph,” the old farmer replied, “The Lord had this field for 20 years before I did, and you should see the mess He made of it!”

An existentialist believes that taking responsibility for one's actions – both positive ones as well as mistakes – is the only way to live a truly authentic life.

This “operating manual” looks at life from that point of view. To be a real person you must learn to live a happy, healthy and productive life.

Existentialists are often said to be anti-religion, but that isn't true. We aren't against religion, but against those who use religion to control other people's lives. Religious people are not a problem, but organized religion and religious organizers are.

By the way, Jesus was an existentialist. When you get rid of all the philosophical garbage that people say **about** Jesus, and look at what Jesus is reported as actually saying, you see an aspect of religion that has nothing to do with organized “church-ianity.”

Jesus taught such ideas as:

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Return not evil for evil.

What you sow you will also reap.

A good tree will not produce bad fruit. (You can know people by their “fruits.”)

People weren't created for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was created for people.

Do good things for others and it's the same as doing good things for Jesus himself (or you yourself).

Those are the same principles that the existentialist holds valuable!

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I am responsible for everything – except my very responsibility, for I am not the foundation of my being. Therefore everything takes place as if I were compelled to be responsible. I am abandoned in the world ... in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant.

Jean-Paul Sartre

USING AN EXISTENTIAL OPERATING MANUAL

This book contains 91 suggestions in seven sections. Read one suggestion each day. That will take three months – a quarter of a year.

Repeat this cycle three more times, making a total of one year.

It's best to read each suggestion in the morning, then meditate on the suggestion throughout the day.

The second time around, begin writing your own operating manual.

Anything you read that really sounds right to you, write it down somewhere, to start your own manual.

Anything you read that doesn't sound right, ignore it. It might have been good for me or someone else, but that doesn't mean it is good for you.

Don't stop searching. Add anything you find that fits the model.

That is:

- It's simple.
- It's realistic.
- It makes sense, and
- It resonates with you personally.

An Existentialist Operating Manual is a lifetime enterprise.

BOOK ONE

LIFE AND POWER

My thoughts lead to decisions which lead to actions.

Power comes from the ability to:

Think the way I choose to think...

Make the decisions I want to make...

Act the way I want to act.

To learn how to act the way I want,

I must first learn how to think.

1.

**You already have inside you all the wisdom
and all the knowledge you'll ever need.**

It's true.

You don't have to come to me or anyone else to attain wisdom.

It's already there inside you.

All you need is to learn how to listen to yourself.

Open yourself up. Block out the outside voices.

Somewhere, deep inside you, is a still small voice that has all the answers.

Some people call that voice your ***Oversoul*** . . .

The part of you that is also a part of everything in the Universe.

A good teacher doesn't give you all the answers, but teaches you the
questions to ask yourself.

2.

You are not your thoughts.

You are the person thinking the thoughts.

Most of us think we are the same as our thoughts.

Because I'm afraid (thinking about fear), I think I'm a coward.

Because I'm thinking about failing, I think I'm a failure.

Because I think the way I was taught to think, I think that's the only possible way for me.

People tell me all the time: "*That's just the way I am.*"

As if that meant they can never be anything else.

But you aren't your own thoughts.

You are the person inside your mind who is thinking those thoughts.

Stop a minute and think about the thinking process.

Who is thinking those thoughts?

Once you realize that you are the thinker, you discover you can choose how and what you want to think!

If you can learn to think any thoughts you want to think, you can become anyone you want to be.

3.

You decide every moment how to react to every situation.

Most people seem to think of themselves as if they were robots.

Someone says something and makes them angry.

Someone else does something and makes them upset.

As if they had no control over the situation.

No one can make you angry or upset or sad or happy.

You decide to be those things.

I can't control what you do, for example.

If you want to call me names, or hit me, or lie about me behind my back,
there's not a lot I can do about it.

But I can decide how to react to what you do or say.

And if I choose to laugh instead of get angry, that's in my power.

That's real power!

To react the way I want to and not the way other people would like me
to.

4.

You are ultimately free to do anything you want to do.

Anything! As long as you are willing to accept the consequences of your actions.

Would you like to fly without wings of any kind?

Jump off a tall building. You'll "fly" quite effectively. Until you hit the street. That's the consequence!

You could also fly without wings by sky-diving -- carrying along an extra set of "wings" for the final stages of flight! But you could do it.

You could do a lot of things you don't realize you can do.

All you have to do is take steps to do them.

Most things won't happen today.

If you want to be rich you'll have to wait a while.

Give up spending any money except for investment.

(No movies. No booze. No parties. No nothing.)

In a few years, working several jobs and saving all your money, you really could be wealthy.

Most of us simply don't want to pay the price.

But all of us could do it if we really wanted to.

Next time you catch yourself saying ***I can't...***, change it to ***I don't want to...***, and you'll be more honest with yourself.

5.

You have never made a mistake in your life.

**Every decision you ever made was done with
the best information available to you at the
time.**

Most people don't wake up in the morning and say:

"I think I'll make a mistake today."

We do everything we do because we think it's the right thing to do.

We just don't have all the information, that's all.

If you ever waited to get all the information you needed to make a
decision...

You'd never get around to making any decisions!

You say you made a mistake getting into a bad relationship?

At the time, it looked like a good relationship, didn't it?

Or you never would have gotten into it.

It only looks like a mistake in hindsight.

We don't make decisions in hindsight!

We have to make every decision right here...

Right now...

With the information available to us.

6.

Not making a decision is the same as making a decision.

Don't think you can escape responsibility by not making a decision.

You're still making a decision.

If you decide not to act to get out of a bad relationship...

You are really deciding to stay in the relationship.

If you can't decide what to do...

You are really deciding to do nothing.

One way or another, you have to make a decision

7.

We are creatures of will.

What you decide determines who you are...

And the type of world you inhabit.

By the act of will -- by making a decision -- you create your world.

Decide to live a loving life, really concerned for the people around you...

And you will find yourself surrounded by loving, caring people.

The world you create will be a loving, caring world.

But decide to live a negative life, using other people...

And you will be surrounded by people who use people, and people who are accustomed to being used.

The world you create will be a negative one.

You have no choice but to choose your world.

Do it wisely.

8.

Your birthright as a human being is...

Total Freedom

and

Total Responsibility

Because you are free to do anything in this life...

As long as you are willing to accept the consequences of your actions...

You are totally responsible for everything you do.

You can't escape the responsibility any more than you can escape the necessity of making choices.

No one makes you do anything.

No one makes you angry, or upset, or happy.

As a human being, you have the freedom to choose how to respond to anything someone else does.

A millionaire once had two sons, an optimist and a pessimist.

One Christmas he decided to break each of them of their obsession.

He filled the pessimist child's room with every toy imaginable, everything every child could possibly want.

He filled the optimist child's room with horse manure.

On Christmas morning, he walked into the pessimist's room.

"Is this all there is?" the pessimist asked.

*He walked into the optimist's room and the child was running around excitedly,
digging in the manure.*

*"With all this horse manure here," the child said, "there has to be a pony in there
somenwhere!"*

You are absolutely free --

Free to see nothing in a world of plenty,

Or a pony in a room of horse manure.

9.

Your curse as a human being is:

Total Freedom

and

Total Responsibility

We say it's your curse because you can't escape it.

You are totally responsible whether you want to be or not.

You might want to avoid responsibility:

Join some religion and try to make god responsible for you...

Blame everything on your parents, or your spouse, or your children...

Complain about the folks in Washington being the cause of all your problems.

But you simply can't get away from the curse of responsibility.

Try to avoid responsibility and you'll find yourself living in a shallow world.

Like a lot of people today.

10.

You have the freedom to write your own script for this life.

You don't have to go through life living a script written for you by someone else.

Your parents' script: ***be a success .. be a failure ... be a man ... be a woman.***

Your peers' script: ***hang tough ... be sexy ... get high ... be a "rebel."***

Society's script: ***don't make waves ... get a job ... do as you're told ... be quiet.***

You have the power and the ability to write your own script.

You can decide how you will live your life.

You can decide how you'll react to other people.

11.

Decide what you want to be in this life...

And begin acting that way.

It's as simple as that.

If you want to be a happy person...

Begin acting like a happy person acts.

If you want to be a successful person...

Begin acting like a successful person would act.

Don't worry if it doesn't feel right at first.

If you can't make it, fake it! is a valid rule for life.

Make the decision...

And then begin acting that way.

12.

Actions are the only things that count.

Intentions don't mean anything.

Good intentions are meaningless.

You can say you love me all you want...

But until you begin acting as if you cared, it doesn't mean anything to me.

It's the same thing in life.

You can say all you want about how you want to be a good person...

But until you begin acting like a good person, you'll never be one.

Life is action.

13.

There are no great acts.

**Only long series of small actions that lead to
great results.**

Don't expect change overnight.

Rarely do we make drastic conversions from one lifestyle to another.
Like Saul on the road to Damascus.

Usually, we begin making small changes. ***One step at a time.***

We begin acting differently in small ways. ***One day at a time.***

And then, one day, we wake up and realize that we have become totally
different people than we were before.

Great revolutions work the same way.

Peace is not won through lightning-bolt action.

During the Vietnam War, a few of us began talking peace.

A dozen at a time would march for peace.

Soon hundreds joined us.

By the time the U.S. left Vietnam, hundreds of thousands marched in
Washington.

But the changes began slowly, in the hearts of a few peace-loving people.

This is also how you create your own life.

Small actions consistently performed.

**Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think, and
suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the
oxen that draw it.**

Dhammapada (ancient Buddhist text)

BOOK TWO

LIFE AND HAPPINESS

Happiness eludes most people because they don't know what to look for.

Happiness is not constant ecstasy.

Ecstasy gets boring after awhile.

Happiness is being comfortable with who you are.

A happy person is content with their life.

It's as simple as that.

14.

Things always work out for the best...

Whether we want them to or not!

There was an interesting study, some years ago, of people facing depression.

Of those who went to a therapist for treatment, 25% were better in six months.

Of those who didn't see anyone at all, 50% were better in six months.

It's true!

About half the people experiencing a problem today...

Will be feeling quite well, thank you, before half a year is out.

(Of course, to be fair to therapists, probably the most depressed people in that study went to therapists, needed the treatment the most, and were the least likely to feel better.)

But the old expression, ***Time heals all wounds***, is remarkably valid.

Just wait, and things tend to work out for the best.

Whether we want them to or not.

(I also believe in the corollary proposition:

Time wounds all heals!)

15.

Happiness is a process of mind over matter:

If you don't mind...

It doesn't matter.

Abraham Lincoln once wrote that most people tend to be just about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Most causes of unhappiness are the result of our wanting things to be different:

We want all the wealth we see on television. We want other people to love us. We want things always to go our way.

Siddhartha Gautama said it a long time ago:

If you want to be happy, stop wanting things.

If you care about what other people say about you... **You have given them a great deal of power over you.**

If you have to have some one person love you... **You have given that person a lot of power over you.**

If your job is necessary in order to buy all the wonderful toys you think you need... **You have given your boss a lot of power over you.**

Stop minding if other people don't like you, or someone else doesn't love you, or if you don't have everything the Joneses have...

And you can be happy.

It's as simple as that.

16.

**The only person who knows what's right for
you...**

Is you.

Nobody else can get inside your head.

Nobody else knows how you feel.

Nobody else has had the same experiences you have had.

Of all the people in this world, you are the only one in your mind.

You are the only person who really knows who you are.

A lot of people think they know what's best for you.

Don't listen to them!

They are responsible for themselves.

Just as you are responsible for yourself.

You -- and only you -- know what you really want.

17.

**You are the only one who has the right to
judge you.**

No one else has the right to tell you...

...How to feel.

...What to wear.

...What to believe.

...How to think.

...Who your friends should be.

Even me!

(Especially me!)

When another person judges someone else...

They are playing god.

And no one has the right to play god to someone else.

A happy human being is someone...

Who won't let anyone else judge them...

And won't judge anyone else.

18.

**Since no one has the right to make
decisions for you...**

**You are totally responsible for making all
your own decisions yourself.**

Two thousand years ago, a famous rabbi named Hillel made the
following statement:

If I am not for myself, Who will be?

(No one.)

If I am only for myself, What am I?

(Nothing.)

And if not now, When?

(Never.)

You have no choice but to become your own best friend.

No one else can be, or wants to be.

It would be so much easier if we could just turn our lives over to some
super-being and let them make all our decisions for us.

But we can't.

We are doomed to act like grown-ups, whether we want to or not.

19.

The past and future don't exist.

They are merely fantasies.

What is a fantasy?

It's something that exists only in your head...

And not out there in the real world.

That's why both the past and future are fantasies.

They only exist in our minds.

There is no ***out there*** for either.

The past is gone. It no longer exists.

The future hasn't arrived yet. Right now, it doesn't exist.

There is nothing you can do to change the past.

It's gone, and it will never come again.

And the future will come with or without our help.

It doesn't pay to live in fantasy.

Stop living in the past.

Stop dwelling on the future.

20.

Only the present is real.

The only thing real...

The only thing really out there...

Is the now.

The only time frame that is real and that you can do anything about...

Is the present.

All actions take place in the present.

Remember, only action is real.

Intentions take place in the future.

That's why they are fantasies.

Regrets take place in the past.

That's why they are fantasies.

Life's gift to each of us is the eternal present.

The perpetual now.

To live life to the fullest...

We must live always in the now.

21.

Planning for the future is a present activity.

Yet it is possible to plan for the future.

Because planning for the future takes place now.

Never forget, however, that the future is fantasy.

A rich man was accosted by a highwayman.

"Your money or your life," the bandit said.

"Take my life," the rich man answered.

"I'm saving my money for my old age."

When the future becomes more real than the present...

We've lost touch with reality.

22.

We are all time travelers.

But to ignore the future...

To refuse to put aside something for tomorrow,

Or for all our many tomorrows,

Is to lose touch with our reality as travelers in time.

We move from the past through the eternal present...

Into the future.

I need to be aware that who I will be tomorrow depends on who I am
today.

If I spend everything I earn...

Take poor care of my body...

Fail to surround myself with loving friends...

I am cheating my future self of life.

23.

The past is always open to revision.

We tend to think of the past as unchangeable.

It happened, didn't it?

There's nothing we can do about it now.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

A Japanese film many years ago explored a crime from the viewpoint of everyone involved.

Each person remembered the crime differently.

Each person's version of the event was like an entirely different story.

But they all described the same reality.

Our memories of the past are colored by our emotions...

And by the words and emotions of other people.

Our parents often tell us how to remember our past.

They do this in person...

And they do it inside our heads.

"You were always a clumsy (or bad, or sickly, or rebellious) kid!"

Is a parental voice many of us carry throughout our lives.

24.

The father and mother inside your mind... Are both really you in disguise.

We hear their voices in our minds...

And we think they themselves are in there somewhere.

They aren't.

The voices of our parents are only our memories of their voices long ago.

And sometimes our memories of what they said aren't really what they said at all.

We remember what we thought they said.

You are free to make the parents in your head become anyone you want them to be.

You can decide what kind of parents you want in your head.

And change them to fit your needs.

You can alter the memories to suit yourself.

You control your own thoughts.

So why insist on remembering only the negative things?

As someone said:

It's never too late to have a happy childhood.

25.

Since you can control your own thoughts...

You can also alter your memories.

I once could only remember the pain from my childhood.

The terrible pain my mother felt...

The pain she unknowingly inflicted on me.

And I was angry with her.

I even thought I hated her.

Now I choose to remember only the good things about my mother.

Yeast bread baking in the oven.

Delightfully funny stories around the dinner table.

A thirst for knowledge and understanding.

Long after my mother was dead...

I finally learned to love her.

I hope you can change your memories now.

Before it's too late for someone you love.

26.

**You can't change what happened to you in
the past.**

Only the way you choose to think about it.

No, you can't change what happened.

You can't turn back the hands of time and make things different.

But you **can** change how the events of the past impact on you.

You can choose to think of the past any way you wish.

You say someone slighted you yesterday?

Now you feel hurt and angry.

Why let what that person did in the past

Control how you feel in the present?

Remember...

Happiness is a question of mind over matter.

If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

BOOK THREE

LIFE AND IDENTITY

Who are you?

You are the person behind the thoughts.

You are that still small voice inside.

You are that ancient wise person who dwells deep inside your mind.

Search deeply within yourself...

And you'll find a god or a goddess.

27.

Why strive for perfection?

You are already perfect!

I once saw a small child wearing a T-shirt that read:

I'm perfect. God don't make mistakes.

What wisdom somebody (probably a grandparent) had!

After all, to think you are anything less than perfect...

Is to impugn the skill of the creator.

The secret of the human state of perfection...

Is the human potential for creation.

You are born with the ability to create yourself.

You can become just about anything you set your sights on.

A great composer or musician.

A great painter or sculptor.

A great benefactor of humanity.

Or maybe the best horse-shoe player on your block!

Whatever you decide to create for yourself...

Will be all the universe expects you to do.

After all, you're perfect.

28.

**But even perfect people don't always have all
the information they need all the time.**

That's the problem, isn't it?

Information.

This is why learning is so uniquely a human trait.

We humans are always learning.

Building huge libraries of information.

Writing more and more books.

Coming up with wonderful new theories about the universe.

We are the information-seeking animal.

You need all the information you can get to make full use of your
perfection.

Never stop learning.

Never stop looking for new information.

Never stop reading.

You'll never have all the information you need.

It's impossible.

But the more information you have, the better decisions you'll be able to make.

29.

We create our world through information.

**By defining things, we give form and
substance to reality.**

The words you use to describe your world are important.

If you always describe your world with words like:

Ugly ... Cruel ... Hateful

You are creating a world that is all those things.

Always use the words to describe your world that you want your world to
be like.

Our distant ancestors lived in times when words like *competition*, *war* and
alienation didn't exist.

They were happier for that.

I know some people whose vocabularies don't include the word *love*.

They are sadder for that.

The more knowledge you have.

The more information you have.

The better you will be able to build your world.

30.

Be careful how you define yourself.

You create yourself the same way you create your world.

By the words you use to describe yourself.

If you define yourself in positive terms...

You will become a positive force in the world.

If you define yourself in negative terms...

You will limit yourself.

Limiting or negative words take many forms.

Nouns that give us a negative form:

Failure, weakling, coward, goof-off, cripple, drunkard.

Adjectives that define us negatively:

Undisciplined, stupid, mediocre, obedient, ugly.

And verbs and adverbs that limit our actions:

I can't..., I shouldn't..., I always..., I never....

Avoid negative words for yourself.

31.

**When you talk about yourself,
Use only those words for you ...
That you want to apply to you.**

Remember.

You are responsible for who you are.

Define yourself as you want to be, and begin acting that way.

You'll be who you want to be before you know it.

Sometimes a brave exterior pays off!

The only course I ever took in statistics was in graduate school.

I barely passed.

I was so busy having fun at my job as crime reporter on the local daily paper, I didn't study statistics well enough to understand it.

Years later, I was desperate for a job.

A mental health clinic advertised for someone who knew statistics.

I responded and got the job.

I got a book and began some serious studying.

A year later, when I left, they said I was the best they'd ever hired!

Who says *chutzpa* doesn't work?

32.

You need to become your own hero.

The most important person in your world is you.

Learn to look up to you.

Superheroes are (to use the vernacular) a crock!

Faster than a speeding bullet? Who cares?

I know some real heroes.

Women who raise three children without a husband.

Work a full-time job to support their families.

And go to school to advance themselves!

That's heroism!

Men who work two or three jobs to support their families.

Pay a mortgage to keep a house to live in.

Yet find time to laugh and play with their children.

That's heroism!

People who can't see or can't walk who are always smiling.

Whether working at a job or undergoing treatment.

That's heroism!

What you do every day to survive is also heroic.

33.

Don't model yourself on someone else.

Create your own *being* from scratch.

Why be merely a reflection of someone else?

Sure, Ghandi was a great person.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a wonderful human being.

But they aren't you.

If you try to make yourself a copy of someone else,

You'll become a photocopy person.

A poor imitation.

A copy is never as good as the original.

Why be a copy when you are an original?

You don't have to try to be like Ghandi or Eleanor Roosevelt (or anyone else),

You can make contributions to the world they never dreamed of.

You're a hero, remember?

34.

Always choose for today.

Don't make choices for your tomorrow.

People say: "I'll worry about that tomorrow. Let the future take care of it."

You are smoking away on a cigarette.

"Sure, I'll get lung cancer some day," you say. "I'll worry about that when the time comes."

You are choosing pain and suffering for your tomorrow...

For the you who will be there in the future.

You have no right to do that!

The only choices you have a right to make are those that affect you today.

You need to act responsibly toward the person you some day will become.

You are working long hours and nursing a painful ulcer. "I'll enjoy all my money when I'm older," you say.

You have no right to do that! It's no fun being old, wealthy and sick.

If you make decisions that make you happy and content today,

You will most likely be making decisions that would guarantee

A happy and content future.

35.

The person you will be tomorrow Is not the same person you are today.

We tend to think of ourselves as static.

Always the same. Never changing.

It's only wishful thinking.

People change. Even you.

We don't want other people to change.

We want our parents, our spouses, our children

To always be the same...

Dependable.

We are not human beings, you know.

We are all human becomings.

We change constantly.

You are a different person than you were ten years ago.

You will be a different person again in 20 years.

Accept the reality of change.

The person you are becoming will be older, wiser, happier.

If you begin now to create that reality.

36.

Don't compare your insides

(Fears, doubts, etc.)

With other people's outsides.

(Appearances)

My insides can sometimes be frightening...

The fears, the doubts, the questions.

Other people always look like they're in complete control.

Confident, calm, powerful.

Look in a mirror some time.

To other people, you probably look just like that...

Confident, calm, powerful.

We make a big mistake when we think other people's outer appearance is
the same as their inner minds.

After all, I know my outer appearance is different from my own inner
reality.

Each of us puts up a brave front to the world outside.

That is seldom who we really are.

37.

You create your own identity
(Like you create your world)
By the choices you make.

Each of us ultimately becomes the product of our actions over a lifetime.

Since each action is a result of a decision we made,

Our choices determine who we are.

Every choice is important, no matter how small.

Choose wisely.

At stake is not merely a few minutes or a few hours,

But your very identity.

One slip, one brief venture into harming others,

Can condemn a person to a lifetime of fear,

Or a criminal record to live down.

Act kindly toward your world

And you create a kind world to live in.

You also create yourself

As a kind person.

38.

**Surround yourself with positive people,
Those who like and respect you.**

Although I create the world through my actions,

I am strongly influenced by the people around me

Who are also creating their worlds.

If I want to live in a positive world,

I must surround myself with other human beings

-- Other world creators --

Who are busy building warm, loving worlds for themselves.

The key is simple:

Someone who likes and respects herself or himself

Will also like and respect you.

Don't look for needy people to be around.

Look for people who are comfortable with themselves.

39.

Avoid negative folk.

If necessary, change your friends.

You can even change your family if need be!

Negative people bring us down.

The anger and fear and helplessness and power-hunger

Of people who don't like themselves

Will constantly work to destroy your own positive reality.

If you want a positive identity for yourself,

Avoid negative folk.

Keep away from them.

If your friends are negative, dump them.

If your family is negative, find new family.

Really!

Family doesn't necessarily mean blood relation.

Robert Frost wrote:

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

Many times, our friends are better family than our relatives.

BOOK FOUR

LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITY

No one is responsible for what you do

Besides yourself.

You are responsible for all your emotions,

All your actions,

All your thoughts,

And all your words.

Because you are in reality all-powerful,

You are also always responsible.

No cop-outs.

40.

Guilt is a waste of time.

I like to tell people I gave up guilt for Lent one year, and forgot to take it up again.

Guilt is the most useless emotion known.

People who are the guiltiest are the ones who continually do the same things over and over again that made them feel guilty in the first place.

You feel guilty because you haven't written poor Aunt Martha in three years?

You still aren't writing her, are you?

Not writing makes you guilty and feeling guilty keeps you from writing her. A vicious circle.

People feel guilty for eating fatty foods.

How about another cheeseburger?

They feel guilty for not making anything of themselves.

What's on the boob-tube tonight?

Guilt for abusing their spouses or children.

Where'd she get that black eye?

If guilt kept us from doing things we'd have a lot less guilt in the world.

Guilt only keeps us doing the things we feel guilty about.

See why I gave it up?

41.

Guilt is nothing but resentment.

Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt Therapy) defined guilt as...

Resentment.

He defined resentment as... *Anger on the surface of the skin.*

He was right on both counts.

You know why you feel guilty about not writing Aunt Martha?

Because you resent having to write Aunt Martha!

And you feel guilty about smoking

Because you resent being told you can't smoke.

You feel guilty about not making anything of yourself,

Because you resent your parents for saying you had to make something of yourself.

Next time you start feeling guilty about something,

Ask yourself: "What am I feeling resentment about?"

Learn to deal with the resentment and you will never feel guilty again.

How do you deal with resentment? **It's nothing but a form of anger.**

Deal with the anger and you can get rid of the resentment.

How do you deal with anger?

Read on!

42.

Anger and fear are your body's natural response to outside threat.

When we are threatened, we respond exactly the way our ancestors did.

We prepare to defend ourselves.

Our body undergoes some natural changes.

First, the body begins to make more energy available.

Adrenaline is pumped into the blood stream.

The heart begins beating more rapidly and more strongly.

Second, the body prepares to cool itself in response to the extra heat.

We begin breathing rapidly and shallowly.

Our blood vessels move closer to the skin.

Third, the body gets into a posture of defense.

Our shoulders hunch forward.

Our arms come forward.

We are ready to respond to the threat.

Fight or flight.

All this happens to you whenever you feel threatened.

Whether it's a life-endangering threat or not.

This is why you can get an ulcer from worrying,

Or depression from a bad relationship.

The body keeps going through physical change to respond to a threat
that never is defined.

***Too much adrenaline. Too much oxygen. Too many tight
muscles.***

Add up to stress.

43.

Anger and fear are the same emotion.

A response to threat.

**The only difference is how you choose to
react to the threat.**

Okay.

Here you are, facing a cave bear with nothing but a big stick to defend
yourself.

(Well, maybe you'll never face a cave bear, but your ancestors probably
did.)

What are you going to do about it?

Your body is ready.

Lots of adrenaline so you have lots of energy.

Lots of oxygen to cool you off.

Your muscles are all tense and ready to go.

If you think you are strong enough to defeat the cave bear with that stick.

Fight.

You adopt a posture with the shoulders thrust forward and up.

Hands out wide.

Your voice goes up in volume and down in tone.

I'M ANGRY!

But...

If you think you might not be able to defeat the cave bear.

Flight.

You adopt a posture with the shoulders forward and down.

Hands close to the sides.

Your voice goes down in volume and up in tone.

I'm afraid!

The first is anger. The second is fear. They're both the same thing.

44.

Anger is that state of mind when you decide to defend yourself.

Anger is the striking-back aspect of the single emotion we call anger-fear.

Angry people want to hit.

They want to destroy.

They want to get rid of the threat actively.

The purpose of anger is to get rid of a threat.

But what if the threat isn't real?

What if it's only an imaginary threat?

Pete is a professional football player. He weighs nearly 300 pounds.

His father pushed him all his life to be the best.

His mother didn't oppose his dad, even when Pete was crying inside,
when he needed someone to step in and say: *that's enough*.

Now Pete is married to a timid little woman who acts a lot like his
mother.

And when he gets frustrated at the world for not understanding him,

He strikes out at his mother.

Only his mother isn't here. His wife is.

The threat is imaginary. It was real when he was a child.

Now he wants to hurt someone the way he was hurt.

His wife could be seriously injured -- or killed.

***Anger tries to eliminate the threat -- even when the threat isn't
real.***

Aggressiveness is the result of anger.

45.

**Fear is that state of mind where you try to
escape from the threat.**

Fear is the *running-away-from* aspect of that single emotion we call anger-fear.

Frightened people want to run away.

They want to get away from the threat.

The purpose of fear is to remove oneself from the source of threat.

Nowadays, when the threats usually aren't real,

People often hide themselves inside themselves.

They cut themselves off from the world.

They cut themselves off from their emotions.

They run from perceived threats by using drugs or alcohol or sickness or other people.

They die a little bit inside themselves.

They hurt themselves.

Fear tries to escape the threat, even when the threat isn't there.

Inaction is the result of fear.

46.

**There is an alternative to fight or flight:
Humans have the ability to talk about it.
To others and to themselves.**

Rarely are we moderns really confronted with a life-threatening situation.

Our "threats" are more likely imaginary.

Not real threats at all. (When was the last time someone actually pulled a knife on you?)

Luckily, we have a way of dealing with threats, real or imaginary.

We can talk about them. ***Negotiate.***

Instead of responding aggressively or passively to a threat,

We can always talk it out. (Though if someone pulls a knife on me, I'm going to run!)

We can assert our rights if the perceived threat is outside ourselves.

Stand up for ourselves.

We can recognize our fantasies if the perceived threat is inside ourselves.

Take responsibility for our own feelings.

We can neutralize the threat with words.

Most animals can't do that. It's one of the "perks" of being human.

47.

You are never a threat to yourself.

(Except in fantasy)

You say you are only angry at yourself?

Impossible!

You can never be a threat to yourself, unless you are living in fantasy.

(Like if you're psychotic or neurotic.)

Our species would not have reached this point if "normal" people killed other people. Or if "normal" people killed themselves.

Early in our evolution, every human being was necessary for the survival of the species.

Only people who live in fantasy are a threat to themselves.

If you think you are angry with yourself, you are really angry at some fantasy inside your own mind. Some voice inside from your past.

Perhaps a parent's voice that says: "*Who do you think you are, anyway?*"

Or: "*You'll never amount to anything, you know.*"

Or: "*Why couldn't you have been as pretty as your sister.*"

These are imaginary threats but it's perfectly normal to be angry at them.

And to use words to understand them.

It isn't normal to turn that anger in on yourself.

48.

When we turn that anger in on ourselves, We become depressed.

That's the classic definition of depression:

Anger turned inward.

A depressed person thinks that he or she is angry at himself or herself.

When actually they are angry at a parent, a spouse, a boss.

A depressed person feels out of control.

After all, when you think your biggest threat is you,

You **are** out of control.

Depression is the result of an individual failing to take responsibility for
their own feelings...

Failing to take responsibility for their own thinking process...

Failing to take responsibility for their own ability to handle stress.

Knowing that you can never be a threat to yourself...

Knowing you can decide what you want to think at any time...

Knowing you can own your parents inside your own mind...

Can be freeing, power-giving tools.

You can never be depressed if you take responsibility for your own thoughts, choices and actions.

49.

You are only responsible for the things you can control.

That's right.

You are not responsible for what you can't control.

You can't control other people's actions.

You are not responsible for them.

You can't control other people's feelings.

You are not responsible for them.

You can't control what happened in the past.

You are not responsible for the past.

Responsibility is based on the ability to act.

If you can't act on something, you can't be responsible for it.

Have you ever had a boss who made you "responsible" for a project,

But didn't give you the authority to carry it out?

Such a boss is called a "crazy maker."

The situation is an impossible one.

Without the ability to act, there can be no responsibility.

If you can't do anything about a situation,

You cannot be responsible for it.

50.

The only things you can control are:

**Everything you do ...
Everything you feel ...
In the present time ...
In the present place ...**

You control everything you do, in the here-and-now.

No cop-outs.

You are responsible for all your actions.

You can control your feelings.

You are never truly "out of control."

The person who "loses his temper" and goes "off the deep end" ...

Is simply finding an excuse not to be responsible.

Acting out of "passion" is just another cop-out.

Everything that you do right now, right here ... you are responsible for.

But anything out of this time and place.

The past, the future, another location ...

You are not responsible for.

Because you have no control over them.

51.

**This means, of course, that you are totally
responsible for everything you do,**

In the here and now.

Everything.

Every action, every thought, every feeling, every intention.

No one can ever make you mad or sad or miserable ...

Or even happy.

The only one responsible for you is you.

Even so-called accidents are usually things we do to ourselves.

Most illnesses are the result of individual will.

Many of the actions of the people around us are often our responsibility.

If I choose to live with a violent person,

I'm going to have to accept responsibility for being hurt, sooner or later...

If I choose to live with a dishonest person,

I must accept responsibility for being cheated, sooner or later...

Because you are responsible for everything you do,

You must act in your own best interests at all times.

No one else is going to.

52.

You are responsible for creating Loving relationships in your life.

You can't make anyone love you.

You can't force someone to stay with you.

You can't manipulate anyone into liking you.

Yet you are responsible for finding love in your life.

We do that by learning how to love.

I am responsible for creating an environment in which love may
blossom...

By accepting other people the way they are,

By surrounding myself with positive people,

By practicing "live and let live,"

And never putting myself down in order to have a relationship.

I create a loving place.

And wait for love to find me.

A Meditation . . .

Never, in sooth, does the lover seek without being sought by his
beloved.

When the lightning of love has shot into *this* heart, know that there
is love in *that* heart.

When love of God waxes in thy heart, beyond any doubt God hath
love for thee.

No sound of clapping comes from one hand without the other
hand.

Rūmī (Islamic mystic)

BOOK FIVE

LIFE AND LOVE

What is love?

Most people don't really have any idea.

We confuse love with ownership.

Jealousy is an ownership issue.

Spouse abuse is an ownership issue.

We confuse love with power.

Rape is a power issue.

We confuse love with sex.

Sex is a physical issue.

Love is the active demonstration of respect between two people.

53.

Love is mutual affirmation.

Two-way respect and consideration.

Love is two people living a conversation.

We all need affirmation.

We all need other people to tell us we have a right to exist.

That's what love is.

Love is two people telling each other they have the right to exist.

Mutual affirmation of existence.

What many people think of love is the opposite of that.

They try to control loved ones.

They manipulate, imprison, punish...

For their own good.

Love is only effective when it's based on mutual respect.

I am only affirmed in my being...

If you totally accept my being,

If you accept that I'm all right.

If you tell me I'm no good,

You are not affirming me.

You are telling me I don't have a right to be here.

If the opposite of love is hate,

Most relationships are based on hatred.

54.

There are four stages of love:

Hi.

I like you.

I love you.

I am in love with you.

Love doesn't have to be head-over-heels intensive.

Love -- mutual affirmation -- can even take place. . .

Between two strangers.

Between friends.

Between lovers.

Between people in a committed relationship.

Hi:

Two strangers meet.

They smile and say "Hi."

Each tells the other silently:

You have a right to be in my world.

I like you:

Two friends share an afternoon together.

They enjoy pleasant time with each other.

Each tells the other silently:

I'm glad you are in my world.

I love you:

Two close friends share joys and trials.

They share their closest feelings.

Each tells the other silently:

I want to share part of my world with you.

I am in love with you:

Two people form a loving relationship.

They spend a good part of their time together.

Each tells the other silently:

I want to share my world with you.

55.

Be kind to strangers.

They can give you love.

Just by saying "Hi."

Collins Avenue is the Main Street of Miami Beach.

Years ago, when Miami Beach was a Mecca for retirees from the Northeast U.S., Collins Avenue was filled with rows of retiree hotels.

Rows of lawn chairs lined the avenue for miles.

You could walk for blocks and see thousands of elderly people sitting in their chairs and looking listlessly at a world passing them by.

One day I started at the south and walked slowly north along the avenue.

As I walked, I smiled and said *Good morning!* to everyone I saw.

The change was miraculous.

As I walked, the listless faces brightened up.

Waves of smiling faces beamed back at me.

People returned my greeting with enthusiasm.

And all I said was **Hi**.

Their smiling faces made me feel good.

They gave love.

56.

Treasure your friends.

They can give you love.

Just by liking you.

We all need friends. People who like us.

I know people who choose their "friends" based on class principles...

On what they can get from them...

On what being with them says to other people...

On how clever and witty they are.

The only valid judge of whether a person is a friend is simply this:

Do they like you?

We all need other people who like us. That's why we all need friends.

A friend doesn't have to know all about you.

A friend doesn't have to share your deepest feelings.

All a friend has to do is enjoy spending time with you.

And really like you.

If you have a friend like this, hang on to her or him.

We need all the friends we can get.

57.

Make time in your life for close friends.

Those who share your deepest feelings.

They give you love -- because they love you.

We don't say *I love you* enough in our society.

We seem to be afraid people might take it wrong.

We seem to think every *I love you* ought to lead to sex.

Pretty sick society we live in, isn't it?

Those people who are comfortable enough with us to share their
feelings...

People with whom we are comfortable enough to share our feelings...

These are rare indeed.

To share who we are with another person ...

Is to say *I love you* to that person.

I want to share part of my world with you.

I want to let you into my life,

Into my thoughts.

Far more valuable is a "lover" like this ...

Than any evening's sexual partner could ever be.

58.

A loving and committed relationship...

**Is something most people spend their lives
looking for.**

**Most people aren't willing to pay the price
required.**

When we tell someone (and mean it):

I want to share my world with you.

We are committing ourselves to doing just that.

The rewards of a being-in-love relationship are great. But the price is high:

I must devote a lot of my time and space to the other person. (As they devote time and space to me.)

I must learn to accept (and respect) our differences.

I must include the other person in all my plans.

I must voluntarily limit my actions if they conflict with my partner's values.

Yet I must never become responsible for my partner.

The price is great. The rewards are worth it.

Most people want the rewards without having to pay the price.

59.

Marriage is only a legal contract,

Not a relationship.

A loving relationship is far more than a marriage.

People get married and expect to have a relationship right away.

The relationship comes later, with work.

The work begins, for most people, after the wedding ceremony.

You can get married for the price of a marriage license.

The price of a loving relationship

Is real commitment.

60.

Really!

It isn't really love if they don't love you back.

Unrequited love makes great plots for romances.

A pity it doesn't really exist.

You can't love someone else if they don't love you back.

Love must be mutual or it doesn't count.

If you think you love someone else but they don't love you...

You are dealing with infatuation, not love.

If you must have someone as your spouse, whatever the cost...

You are dealing with greed, not love.

If you love your grown children so much you'll do anything for them...

You are dealing with emptiness, not love.

Love only exists between two equal individuals,

Voluntarily acting out of respect for each other.

61.

And it isn't love...

If you don't love them back.

If someone says they love you,

But you don't feel good when you're around them.

It isn't love.

If someone adores you and says they'll do anything for you,

But you feel nothing for them.

It isn't love.

Be wary of people who say they love you when you don't love them.

They probably only want to control you...

Possess you...

Make you something other than who you really are.

Someone can buy you expensive gifts,

Shower you with luxuries...

But if you don't love them,

None of it will do you any good.

62.

Rape is a power issue.

And has nothing to do with love.

Much of what parades for love in our society ...

Is only an exercise of power.

The conquest of another person ...

Is an attempt to exercise power over them,

And that isn't love.

Rape (like its less violent twin, seduction)

Is a rejection of the other person's humanity.

Rather than affirming another person,

It denies that person's humanity.

Anytime force is used to make someone do something they don't want to
do,

That person is being treated like something less than human.

Don't confuse power with love.

Don't confuse sex with caring.

63.

Jealousy is a property issue...
And has nothing to do with love.

Shakespeare wrote it long ago:

*"Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them,
But not for love."*

Dying for another person, or killing another person, has nothing to do
with love.

Any time violence is used in a relationship, it's a sign of ownership.

A man who thinks he owns his wife,

Feels justified in hurting her.

But ownership has no place in a loving relationship.

Ownership implies an unequal relationship.

One owner, one slave.

If you treat me like a slave, you are not affirming my being.

You might value a piece of property,

But you don't respect it.

True love is based on respect.

64.

Don't take yourself so seriously!

We forget that love is supposed to be fun.

We are supposed to enjoy each other...

Be happy when we're with each other.

Lighten up!

A therapist friend of mine often has her clients do one thing.

Write down the words:

"This person is not to be taken so seriously."

And then post them on the bathroom mirror,

As the first thing they see every morning.

Love flourishes in joy.

It languishes in sadness, and anger, and manipulation.

Most of the problems in love relations will disappear...

When we stop taking ourselves so seriously.

65.

It's true.

Lovers really do live longer.

People in loving relationships tend to be physically healthier than people without love in their lives.

That's because we need love in order to be healthy.

You need your friends.

You need your loving companions.

You need people who like you,

Who enjoy spending time with you.

Your body responds to a good mental attitude.

And loving friends help you maintain a good mental attitude.

BOOK SIX

LIFE AND HEALTH

Your body is just as much a part of who you are as anything else.

If your body is healthy, your mind can function properly.

If it isn't, you'll find it hard to do anything creatively.

As a society, we've had two thousand years of being told our
bodies are worthless...

And that only the Spirit is important.

Don't believe it!

Your health is the most valuable possession of all.

66.

Body and mind are one.

There are, I'm told, two kinds of people in the world:

Those who believe there are two kinds of people in the world,

And those who don't.

Such an arbitrary division of the world into two classes is called a
dichotomy.

For some reason, our civilization decided long ago to create a dichotomy
of body and mind.

Our body is supposed to be the physical part of us. Our mind is the
ethereal part.

Actually, both are the same.

Every nerve cell in your body is capable of thought, at some level.

Your stomach sends a message to the rest of your body that you are
hungry. Is "hunger" existent only in your brain?

Of course not! You feel hunger with every part of you.

The same goes for every thought and every emotion.

You feel pain and loneliness and exhilaration in all your body --

Your skin, your muscles and even deep inside.

Take care of your body,

If you want to think correctly.

67.

If you want to be well, Learn to listen to what your body says.

I was raised in Texas.

As a small child I drank "coffee milk" -- milk with sugar and coffee flavoring.

I was drinking black coffee by the time I was 10 years old.

As an adult, I often drank five to ten cups of coffee in a day.

One day I began to wonder why my stomach was upset so often.

Why I often had "pressure" headaches.

And why I frequently had insomnia.

When I quit drinking so much coffee I went through three days of splitting headaches.

But the stomach pains, the daily headaches and the insomnia disappeared.

My body was "telling" me to do something about my addiction.

Listen to your body.

It's possible coffee doesn't have that effect on you.

But if you are having physical symptoms of any kind, your body is saying something to you.

Maybe what it's trying to say is important.

68.

You think with every cell in your body.

Unaware people are only conscious of the voices in their heads.

I'm talking about otherwise "normal" people.

They think that they think only with their minds.

But every cell in your body is conscious.

Have you ever met someone new,

And fell immediately under their spell of words?

Your "mind" thought they were witty and important and friendly,

But your skin felt crawly or creepy in their presence.

Later you discovered they were a con artist.

You should have listened to your body.

If you become aware of how your body feels,

You'll learn to listen to what it's saying to you.

69.

Think sick and you'll be sick.

Just as our body talks to us, it listens to us.

If you think you are sick,

Eventually, your body will become sick.

Pay attention to the words you use to describe yourself.

With all the flu going around, I know I'll catch it too.

You give me such a headache!

I can't stomach my boss any longer.

Those kids are a pain in the neck.

You'd be surprised how often the people who say such things,

End up with influenza, headaches, ulcers and shoulder pain.

A good mental attitude is the best protection against illness.

Really!

70.

Germs don't cause disease.

Hey, wait a minute, you're saying.

We know bacteria and viruses are the agents behind infectious diseases.

That's right, but they don't **cause** the diseases.

Every second, you breathe in enough *pneumococcus* bacteria to kill a dozen people.

Why don't you have pneumonia?

Because the bacteria only attack your body when your immune system is down.

The cause of pneumonia is the failure of your body to defend itself.

The bacteria create the symptoms after your body lets them in.

Our bodies' immune systems are extremely sensitive to stress.

Control stress and you can keep an efficient immune system.

Undue stress can be caused by tiredness,

Hunger,

Anger,

Loneliness,

Or internal pressures: the *must's* and *have to's* and *ought to's* that fill our minds.

Mental health is the first step toward physical health.

71.

If you want to be healthy,

Learn to relax.

We live in an up-tight world.

We eat, drink and smoke a lot of things that increase the stress in our lives.

Relaxation is the natural state for your body.

Slow down your breathing and see if you don't feel better.

Breathe more deeply. Breathe with your nostrils instead of your mouth.

Listen to your body.

If your shoulders are hunched forward, force them back.

Tell them to relax.

Visualize the tension flowing out of your body.

Close your eyes several times during each day,

And imagine yourself in some relaxing locale.

Lying on the sand with ocean waves lapping over your body.

Standing under a waterfall deep in a forest, feeling the gentle spray.

Walking through a field of wild flowers with mountains all around.

Put your body in control and it will relax itself automatically.

What you think and how you feel

Control the production of brain and body chemicals.

A lot of physicians insist that our moods are controlled entirely by brain chemicals.

Take the right chemicals, they say, and any mood can be created.

If you are depressed, the right chemical can cure you.

Don't believe it!

Research has shown that your moods and your actions **actually control the level of brain chemicals.**

If you are in a happy mood, your brain is busily producing chemicals associated with happiness.

If you exercise strenuously, your body produces pain-reducing chemicals.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

The moods or the brain chemicals associated with the moods?

Knowing the power of the human mind, I believe the mind is in control.

Your mind is in control of you.

73.

Be wary about taking any mind-altering chemical.

Think about all the stuff people stuff into their bodies.

On the streets, even school children can get all the uppers and downers they want.

Uppers to make you more mentally active. Downers to make you less mentally active.

The body is torn apart chemically.

Visit three physicians in a row and you can get enough tranquilizers and diet pills to do exactly the same thing.

Visit your local bar and you can duplicate the result with alcohol.

(One glass of red wine a day **will** help you live longer. More can actually reduce your life span.)

I've known people with mild depression who visited a physician and walked out with enough drugs to put an elephant into a coma.

They are still taking those drugs a decade later, long after the situation that prompted the depression disappeared.

My personal rule of thumb is this: ***If it isn't a question of life or death, I refuse to take mind-altering chemicals.***

It doesn't make any difference where you get it,

From a pusher on the street or a physician in a white coat.

A drug is still a drug.

74.

Don't take any medication unless you really need it.

Medications are wonderful things.

I wouldn't be alive today if penicillin hadn't been discovered when it was.

I'm thankful it was available in that Dallas hospital back in 1944.

In an emergency, or in case of major illness, modern medicine is truly miraculous. But we can misuse medicines if we take them when we don't really need them.

Many bacteria have become immune to common antibiotics, simply because the antibiotics have been over-used.

Some people take antibiotics when they have a common cold, even though a cold is caused by a virus, which is not affected by any antibiotic.

We have a warlike attitude toward disease: We'll fight the fever, fight the pain, fight the upset stomach.

Most of the time, however, our bodies are quite capable of resisting illness, if we only give them a chance.

If I have an emergency or major illness, I'll go see my physician right away. But for most illnesses, I trust old home remedies or herbal cures or even homeopathic pills!

Antibiotics generally kill the useful bacteria as well, including those in your stomach that help you digest your food.

If it's really necessary, I'll take an antibiotic.

But why cause my stomach to get upset if it isn't necessary?

75.

Look to nature for most of your medicines.

If you have trouble sleeping,

Drink a cup of warm milk instead of taking a sedative.

There are a lot of natural foods that can help put you to sleep.

Warm milk is probably one of the best.

It contains a natural ingredient that induces sleep.

A lot of herbal teas will do the same.

My favorites are catnip tea, chamomile tea, and passionflower tea.

Science has identified thousands of foods that can cure disease.

Chicken soup is a wonderful curative for the common cold.

Garlic and hot peppers also help.

Ginger root can cure seasickness.

With a little study, and a lot of listening to your own body,

You can create your own home pharmacopoeia!

76.

Learn to be gentle with yourself.

We need to be gentle with ourselves in two ways.

One, we need to stop putting caustic chemicals into our bodies.

We need to start accepting the power of our bodies to heal themselves.

Two, we need to stop putting ourselves down so much.

Some people learn about their own ability to create illnesses.

So they get a cold and immediately begin putting themselves down for making themselves sick!

You became ill in the first place because of stress in your body.

Why add more stress?

Accept who you are and what you are, totally.

Caustic thoughts are just as harmful as caustic substances.

Probably more so.

Always think kindly thoughts about yourself.

77.

Learn to treat your body with respect.

Just as you want to be around people who respect you,

So you need to learn to **be** someone who respects you.

Your body is truly a miraculous instrument.

Capable of changing temperature in different climates,

Capable of converting some really strange foods into useful energy,

Capable of doing all sorts of interesting things, from dancing to
swimming to operating a computer keyboard.

Respect your body for the miracle it is.

78.

You are your body.

As far as this life goes, you and your body are inseparable.

If you harm your body, you harm yourself.

If you neglect your body, you neglect yourself.

If you honor your own body, you honor yourself.

A healthy individual nourishes and takes care of their body.

A healthy person takes care of their own mind.

A healthy person understands that mind and body are one.

And they themselves are their body-mind.

BOOK SEVEN

LIFE AND SOCIETY

Humans are social creatures.

We seem to function best in groups of other humans.

Not only do we need the physical support of other people, for food
and clothing and housing,

We need the emotional support of others.

We need their love.

Even more importantly,

We help create the world that other people live in.

And they help create the world we live in.

Connectedness is a reality.

79.

**As long as you cause no harm,
You are free to do whatever you wish.**

In personal terms, we know we are free to do anything we want to do...

As long as we are willing to accept the consequences.

But in relation to society as a whole, our obligation becomes greater.

We are free to do anything we want, as long as we harm nothing.

That's a tough requirement!

Something has to be harmed every time we sit down to eat.

It means I must constantly judge every action to balance the harm that
might be done.

Is the harm to that stalk of lettuce I pluck for my salad ... greater than the
harm I might sustain without food to eat?

Is the value of that hamburger to me ...

Worth the fact that a large mammal had to die in order to produce it?

Life becomes a balancing act.

It's the world's oldest moral principle.

Live and let live.

An ye harm none, do what ye will.

Return not evil for evil.

80.

The requirement that we do no harm

**Applies to other people, other living
creatures, even inanimate things,**

And to you yourself.

If you want to walk peacefully in your world...

You must learn to do no harm in your world.

Everything in the world is sacred.

The rocks, the trees, the seas.

The flying bird, the creeping snail.

Your next door neighbor.

And you yourself.

Anything that hurts another creature --

From its point of view --

Is morally wrong.

The word "evil" simply means harm to another creature or thing.

An evil person is one who causes harm.

81.

The universe operates on balances.

Life is a balancing act.

Native Americans knew this instinctively.

If they cut a branch for a dwelling,

They did so only with a deep sense of respect.

They thanked the tree for its contribution.

If they killed a deer for food,

They did so only with a deep sense of respect and gratitude.

They asked the deer for permission.

They honored the animal for its contribution.

We need to gain that sense of balance in life.

For everything we take from the earth,

We need to replace it with something else.

If I must cause harm in order to obtain food,

Let me do as little harm as possible,

And let me do so with deep respect for the source of the food.

Living life in balance

Means to minimize harm and recognize my debt to the earth.
82.

Everything in the universe is connected.

Everything.

We realize the importance of causing no harm in our world ...

When we realize that everything in the world is connected.

The air you breathe was produced by phytoplankton in the middle of the
ocean,

And by trees growing on mountain-tops.

Inside your body, the oxygen is made available to you thanks to the work
of some tiny bacteria-like creatures called *mitochondria*.

Were it not for these creatures, you could not live.

The food you eat was grown in fields nourished by water evaporated
from the sea,

By tiny nitrogen-fixing creatures in the soil,

By hard-working human beings who till the land.

The electricity you use was produced most likely from coal created
thousands of years ago from the bodies of ancient plant life.

The very elements that make up your body were created in the bowels of
a star much larger than our sun...

That destroyed itself 10 billion years ago.

From that debris was produced our sun, the planets, the iron that courses
through your veins.

Everything is connected.

Destroy the phytoplankton in the seas...

And humans will cease to exist on earth.

83.

Everything in the universe is alive.

Everything.

The form of life you and I enjoy seems to be rare in the universe.

We are self-aware life forms

Stranded on an island far out on the rims of a minor galaxy.

But there is increasing evidence that everything in the universe has some
level of awareness.

Some level of intelligence.

Every particle of matter and every burst of energy ...

Respond to the same stimuli the same way,

Everywhere in the universe.

The throbbing micro-universe of the electron

Seems to be fully as alive as we ourselves.

The complex patterns of chemicals, plasmas and energies within a star

Are fully as complicated as the structure of the human body.

Native Americans said everything was alive.

They were right.

*I must control my actions so that I cause harm to nothing -- living
or non-living.*

84.

**Every action you take --
No matter how small --
Has an effect on your world.**

Your actions influence your world.

One smile to a stranger can start a pattern of smiles that could
conceivably circle the earth.

One nasty remark to a loved one...

Will most certainly come back to you negatively.

Never underestimate the ripple effect of small actions.

Little kindnesses often result in great rewards.

Small injustices often produce great pain.

Be careful how you act.

Each action helps create your world.

85.

Judge everything you do by:

Is this how I want my world to be?

In World War II, Albert Camus worked in the French Resistance against the Nazi invaders. At first he worked with the Communists.

He finally left them, because they required agents to assassinate enemies.

Camus said that he could no longer support any movement that required the taking of a human life,

For to do so, was to be a murderer himself.

Camus realized that his actions created the world he lived in.

If he supported murder, he was creating a world of killing.

Every action you take ...

Every movement you support ...

Every politician you vote for ...

Is a statement to the world of who you are and what kind of world you want to live in.

If you act violently toward your friends and loved ones...

You create a violent world.

As Jesus once said:

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

86.

If you would live in an honest world...

Act honestly in your world.

The kind of life you lead determines the kind of world you live in.

The principle is really quite simple.

People are attracted to people who tend to be like themselves.

If your actions reveal you to be a grasping, dishonest person,

You will attract grasping, dishonest people into your life.

But believe me,

No crook wants to be in the company of a truly honest person for very long.

Ask any con man.

The best victim is another con.

How you act determines the type of people you attract,

And how other people respond to you.

If you want a better world for your children, Create that world through your own actions.

Act the way you want the world to act.

There's an old story about a successful businessman who took his 2-year-old son and placed him on top of a tall dresser.

"Jump!" he told his son, "I'll catch you."

"I'm afraid," the child said.

"Look, if you can't trust your father, who can you trust? Jump and I guarantee I'll catch you."

The child jumped off the dresser. The businessman stepped out of the way. His son landed painfully on the floor.

"Remember that," the father told his weeping child. "Never trust anybody!"

This father was passing on to his child the same twisted morals, the same twisted world he himself inhabited.

Whatever you want for your child, be sure to live it yourself.

If you want your child to be happy, be a happy person -- Create a happy home life.

I've known men who wanted to leave a comfortable life to their children. They worked hard. They were seldom home and when they were home they were tired and irritable.

They gave their children wealth, and wondered why their children
seemed so ungrateful.

88.

Life isn't supposed to be fair.

It just is.

While it is our responsibility to respect the balance in our world...

We cannot always expect balance from the world.

At least, not from our limited perspectives.

Things don't always work out the way we planned them.

There are too many people out there creating their worlds as well.

Sometimes, it just doesn't seem fair.

Well, it isn't supposed to be fair.

(When I was child, I was told that "fair" is nothing but a country circus!)

You say you worked hard all your life?

And look what you have to show for it -- nothing!

You can't go back and change the past.

You can only begin right now to create a new world for yourself.

Don't expect the world to be fair.

*Accept the universe on its terms and it will more likely accept you
on yours.*

89.

Yet the things we do will come back to us, Eventually.

Eastern religions have a principle known as *karma*.

Kind of like Newton's third Law of Motion:

Every action produces an equal action in response.

Karma does work.

But not always in the way we expect,

Or when we expect it to happen.

Everything you do will come back to you.

Sooner or later.

It's hard to see *karma* at work in the world,

Because we can't see into the hearts of all the evil-doers.

We can't see the pain the universe inflicts on them.

We simply have to act as if we understood that karma was applicable.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

90.

There is a statute of limitations on guilt.

After a child turns 18, the parents are no longer responsible!

Our responsibility toward our own minor children is greater than to any other human beings.

We brought them into the world.

We are responsible for preparing them for life.

Ideally, we will begin giving each child a greater amount of freedom as the child grows older.

Until, finally, we set them free.

After that time, at about the age of 18, we are no longer responsible for them.

Don't keep putting yourself down because you think you raised your children incorrectly.

You can't go back and change anything, so you aren't responsible.

Besides, parents have a lot less effect on their children than they think they do.

After your children are grown, your responsibility is to yourself.

Let them go find their own therapists!

91.

Be kind to yourself.

Be kind to all of creation.

If you remember to treat yourself with kindness,

You will remember to treat others with kindness.

If you refuse to judge yourself,

You will never be guilty of judging others.

If you learn to listen to and obey your own body,

You will learn to listen to and respond to the needs of others.

If you cause your own body no harm,

You will cause no harm to others either.

If you learn to love yourself,

You can learn to love others as well.

Deep inside you

Is a fount of infinite wisdom.

Respect yourself,

The source of all that wisdom.

A Meditation

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the
heaven;

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes

An Existentialist Operating Manual

The Seven Daily Lists

LIFE AND POWER

1. You already have inside you all the wisdom and all the knowledge you'll ever need.
2. You are not your thoughts. You are the person thinking the thoughts.
3. You decide every moment how to react to every situation.
4. You are ultimately free to do anything you want to do.
5. You have never made a mistake in your life. Every decision you've ever made was done with the best information available to you at the time.
6. Not making a decision is the same as making a decision.
7. We are creatures of will.
8. Your birthright as a human being is: Total Freedom and Total Responsibility
9. Your curse as a human being is: Total Freedom and Total Responsibility
10. You have the freedom to write your own script for this life.
11. Decide what you want to be in this life ... And begin acting that way.
12. Actions are the only things that count. Intentions don't mean anything.
13. There are no great acts. Only long series of small actions that lead to great results.

LIFE AND HAPPINESS

14. 'Things always work out for the best ... Whether we want them to or not!
15. Happiness is a process of mind over matter: If you don't mind... It doesn't matter.
16. 'The only person who knows what's right for you... Is you.
17. You are the only one who has the right to judge you.
18. Since no one has the right to make decisions for you. .. You are totally responsible for making all your own decisions yourself.
19. 'The past and future don't exist. 'They are merely fantasies.
20. Only the present is real.
21. Planning for the future is a present activity.
22. We are all time travelers.
23. 'The past is always open to revision.
24. 'The father and mother inside your mind... Are both really you in disguise.
25. Since you can control your own thoughts ... You can also alter your memories.
26. You can't change what happened to you in the past. Only the way you choose to think about it.

LIFE AND IDENTITY

27. Why strive for perfection? You are already perfect!
28. But even perfect people don't always have all the information they need all the time.
29. We create our world through information. By defining things, we give form and substance to reality.
30. Be careful how you define yourself.
31. When you talk about yourself, use only those words for you that you want to apply to you.
32. You need to become your own hero.
33. Don't model yourself on someone else. Create your own being from scratch.
34. Always choose for today. Don't make choices for your tomorrow.
35. The person you will be tomorrow ... Is not the same person you are today.
36. Don't compare your insides (Fears, doubts, etc.) with other people's outsides. (Appearances)
37. You create your own identity (Like you create your world) By the choices you make.
38. Surround yourself with positive people, those who like and respect you.
39. Avoid negative folk. If necessary, change your friends. You can even change your family if need be!

LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 40. Guilt is a waste of time.
- 41. Guilt is nothing but resentment.
- 42. Anger and fear are your body's natural response to outside threat.
- 43. Anger and fear are the same emotion. A response to threat. The only difference is how you choose to react to the threat.
- 44. Anger is that state of mind when you decide to defend yourself.
- 45. Fear is that state of mind where you try to escape from the threat.
- 46. There is an alternative to fight or flight: Humans have the ability to talk about it. To others and to themselves.
- 47. You are never a threat to yourself. (Except in fantasy)
- 48. When we turn that anger in on ourselves, we become depressed.
- 49. You are only responsible for the things you can control.
- 50. The only things you can control are: Every thing you do ... Everything you feel ... In the present time ... In the present place.
- 51. This means, of course, that you are totally responsible for everything you do, in the here and now.
- 52. You are responsible for creating loving relationships in your life.

LIFE AND LOVE

53. Love is mutual affirmation. Two-way respect and consideration. Love is two people living a conversation.
54. There are four stages of love: Hi. I like you. I love you. I am in love with you.
55. Be kind to strangers. They can give you love. Just by saying "Hi."
56. Treasure your friends. They can give you love. Just by liking you.
57. Make time in your life for close friends. Those who share your deepest feelings. They give you love -- because they love you.
58. A loving and committed relationship ... Is something most people spend their lives looking for. Most people aren't willing to pay the price required.
59. Marriage is only a legal contract, Not a relationship.
60. Really! It isn't really love if they don't love you back.
61. And it isn't love... If you don't love them back.
62. Rape is a power issue. And has nothing to do with love.
63. Jealousy is a property issue ... And has nothing to do with love.
64. Don't take yourself so seriously!
65. It's true. Lovers really do live longer.

LIFE AND HEALTH

- 66. Body and mind are one.
- 67. If you want to be well, learn to listen to what your body says.
- 68. You think with every cell in your body.
- 69. Think sick and you'll be sick.
- 70. Germs don't cause disease.
- 71. If you want to be healthy, learn to relax.
- 72. What you think and how you feel control the production of brain and body chemicals.
- 73. Be wary about taking any mind-altering chemical.
- 74. Don't take any medication unless you really need it.
- 75. Look to nature for most of your medicines.
- 76. Learn to be gentle with yourself.
- 77. Learn to treat your body with respect.
- 78. You are your body.

LIFE AND SOCIETY

- 79. As long as you cause no harm, You are free to do whatever you wish.
- 80. The requirement that we do no harm applies to other people, other living creatures, even inanimate things, and you yourself.
- 81. The universe operates on balances. Life is a balancing act.
- 82. Everything in the universe is connected. Everything.
- 83. Every thing in the universe is alive. Everything.
- 84. Every action you take -- No matter how small -- Has an effect on your world.
- 85. Judge every action by: Is this how I want my world to be?
- 86. If you would live in an honest world. .. Act honestly in your world.
- 87. If you want a better world for your children, create that world through your own actions.
- 88. Life isn't supposed to be fair. It just is.
- 89. Yet the things we do will come back to us, Eventually.
- 90. There is a statute of limitations on guilt. After a child turns 18, the parents are no longer responsible!
- 91. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to all of creation.

Some Comments on Numbers

There are 13 months in a year.

You say 12? You might be technically correct, but not really so.

The word "month" means simply "the moon."

A month originally was the period from one new moon to another.

There are just about exactly 28 days in one "moon."

This makes 13 months of 28 days in every year.

$$13 \times 28 = 364$$

A lunar month is divided into four parts:

New moon, first quarter, full moon, last quarter.

Each quarter takes about seven days.

This is how we got our word "week."

The original word "week" meant "to turn."

A week was the **turning** from one quarter of the moon to another.

For this reason, to our ancestors, the number 7 stood for change, and 13 was a term of completeness.

A lucky number.

Jesus' band contained 13 people (12 disciples and Jesus himself.)

There were 13 tribes of Israel. (Joseph's two sons each founded a tribe. The 13th tribe were the Levites, the priests.)

Each book in this volume contains 13 suggestions.

There are 7 books.

If you read one suggestion each day, it will take you exactly one season
(one quarter of a year, 91 days) to complete the volume.

Read through the book daily for a full year and you will have read each
suggestion four times.

You will be a happier and more successful person!